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In 943, Mulraja I (960-995), Chalukya prince of Kalyani founded an independent dynasty, known as Chalukya of Anahilapataka or the Solanki dynasty. He is famous for building the great temple of Rudramahalya at Sidhpur. He was succeeded by his son Chamundaraja, and he in turn was succeeded by his son Vallbaraja, who died after a short reign of six months. His son Durlabharaja (1009-1021) ruled for 12 years and was succeeded by his nephew Bhima I, who is well known in the annals of Gujrat. It was Mehmud of Ghazna who plundered the temple of Somnath in 416/1026 during the reign of Bhima I. Mehmud killed the people at large number who happened to come in his passages and destroyed their fortifications and smashed idols in pieces. The temple of Somnath was built upon 56 pillars of teakwood coated with lead. The principal idol itself was in a chamber. According to Ibn Athir (1st vol., p. 97), "Mehmud seized it, part of it he burnt, and part of it he carried away with him to Ghazna, where he made it a step at the entrance of the grand mosque." Gold and jewels worth 2 million dinars, and the stone phallic emblem of the god were transported to Ghazna, and the number of the slain exceeded fifty thousand. During the fierce operations of Mehmud, Bhima I had fled from his kingdom and sought refuge in Kutchh. After the departure of Mehmud, Bhima I recovered his country and rebuilt the temple of Somnath. He died in 1063 and was succeeded by his third son Karna I, who had subdued the Kolis and Bhils in his dominions. His successor was Jaysinha, surnamed Sidhraja, who ascended in 1094 as the 7th ruler of the Solanki dynasty. He was one of the most remarkable kings of Gujrat, who inflicted a crushing defeat on the ruler of Malwa and annexed it to his dominions, and assumed the title of "King of Avanti". He was a just, kind and sagacious ruler and extended his patronage to learned men. It is said that Pir Satgur, a famous Ismaili dai had arrived in Gujrat during his period. Hemacandra Suri (1088-1172) was a contemporary Jain sage and a prolific writer, who had rapidly acquired a great reputation for learning and was much patronaged by Jaysinha Sidhraja and his successor, but he did not mention any missionary activity of Pir Satgur in Gujrat. The most important account mostly gleaned from the ginans and the traditional materials, tracing the advent of Pir Satgur in the reign of Jaysinha Sidhraja (1094-1143). Accordingly, he is said to have come to India from Setar Depa via the city of Bhildi and proceeded to Patan in Gujrat.

Pir Nuruddin, who assumed the title, Satgur (true master) or Satgur Nur (light of the true master), had made a large proselytism at Patan in Gujrat among the low castes of Kharwa, Kanbi and Kori. He cultivated the seeds of proselytism entirely with peaceful penetration, and there is no instance where force was employed. Pir Satgur gained success by adapting himself to the local cultural conditions and by leading a simple and pious life. It must be borne in mind that the new converts recognized Islam through Ismailism in early stage in the name of Satpanth (true path). Hence, he had planted the seeds of the Satpanth Ismailism in India, which was a quietistic, meditative and mystically oriented in the embryonic stage.

The historicity of Pir Satgur is blanketed mistily in tales and miracles in florid and bombastic style absolutely bereft of historical value. He is however said to have betrothed to the daughter of king Surchand, the chief of Navsari, and nothing else is known for historical purpose. We may safely

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Ismaili Mission in Gujrat, India

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conclude that the prime objective of his preaching was the conversion of Hindu rather than the attraction of Muslims to the Ismaili fold. The narratives of later sources provide some divergent account of the period of mission he represented in Gujrat. The weakness of the later sources, indicating however, a remote possibility, not a strong one, that he was sent by Imam Mustansir (d. 487/1095) from Cairo. Some placed his period much later during the time of Imam Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salam (d. 561/1166) from Alamut. According to the ginans (hymns), he came from Daylam, an epithet of Iran. It is however, much nearer to reasonable possibility that he had arrived in Gujrat when dai Abdul Malik bin Attash (d. after 494/1101), was active in Ismaili mission in central and western regions of Iran, with a headquarters at Ispahan. The tombstone of the shrine of Pir Satgur, the oldest monument of the Khoja Ismailis in India, located at Navsari, near Surat, places his death on 487/1095. It is also possible to draw an inference on this juncture that Pir Shams (d. 757/1356) arrived in Uchh Sharif almost in 727/1328, and he writes in his one ginan (no. 64:2) that he reached there about 240 years after the death of Pir Satgur, and therefore, it is almost in conformity with the date inscribed on the tombstone.

It is worth stressing on this juncture that the Sanskrit (Sanskrta, i.e. prepared, refined or cultivated), a classical literary language of India, came into existence probably with the outset of the Christian era. It is a scholarly language with a status similar to that of Latin in medieval Europe. It is an old Indo-Aryan tongue from which the Prakrit evolved during 11th century. The Prakrit is the mother of Marathi, Hindi and Gujrati languages. In its early stage, the Gujrati was known as an apbrunsh (corrupted) dialect during 12th century, representing an original imprint of the Prakrit. After having different transformations, the present Gujrati evolved with its full swing during the 14th century. Keeping all this in mind, it is safe to conclude that the language of Gujrati was yet in the cradle in a crude form during the period of Pir Satgur. It is therefore deserves notice that the extant Gujrati ginans attributed to Pir Satgur are the later compositions, reflecting modernity in its style.

Pir Satgur is said to have emphasized the new adherents on the practice of tithe, or religious dues; the observation of religious ethics and attendance in religious assembly. He did not introduce new rites, and as a result, no peculiar religious lodge was erected. The practice of zikr was however remained into practice as the milestone of the Satpanth. The new converts thus became known as the Khojasfor the first time.

Let us pause for a moment to examine the origin of the word khoja. The new converts became known as khoja - a title firstly came to be originated during the time of Pir Satgur. Sayed Imam Shah (d. 926/1520) describes in his "Moman Chetamani" (no. 198-199) that, "Pir Satgur Nur had converted them, and consigned a path to be protected. He made them Khojas after conversion, and gave the essence of the path. The Satpanth started since then with a practice of tithe." Thus, it is not difficult to determine with exactitude that the term khoja came to be known from the time of Pir Satgur.

The word khoja is supposed to have derived from koh-cha means "small mountain", and later on, it was changed to kauja or kohja. This derivation is almost irrelevant, rather not convincing. Most of the modern scholars however hazard an opinion that it is a corrupt form of khwaja (lord or master), which also seems incorrect. It must be borne in mind that Sayed Imam Shah used both the word khoja in "Moman Chetamanni" (stanza 199) and khwaja (stanza 122) as well, where the question of the corruption itself becomes annuled, and therefore, the modern theory suggesting its root from khwaja seems almost doubtful. It should also be known that the Ismaili Pirs in India had never introduced any foreign terminology during the early stage of conversion. The above assumption seems to have grown in Sind, where the Iranian terminologies were in vogue in the Sindhi language. In Sind, the word khoja is also pronounced with the corresponding prevalent word khwaja, and it has probably constrained the scholars to attest its derivation from khwaja.

The early extant records indicate that the term khoja stands in its original form without being corrupted. An inscription, for instance, is discovered at Patan, Gujrat by Col. Tod, vide his "Travels

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in Western India" (p. 506), belonging to the year 662/1264. This inscription is found in the temple of Harsata, which was originally a mosque in the time of Arjundeva (1262-1274), the second king of Vaghela line of the Solanki dynasty of Anhilvad. It reads that a ship-owner, called Khoja Abu Ibrahim had donated a piece of land, an oil-mill and two shops; and from its income, a mosque had been built. Khoja Abu Ibrahim was an Indian and living in Hormuz in Iranian Gulf. From this antique record, it is difficult to surmise that the above inscribed term khoja should have been khwaja prior to the period of 662/1264. While examining further earliest records, it is known that Kiya Buzrug Ummid (d. 532/1138), the second ruler of Alamut had dispatched his envoy, called Khoja Muhammad Nassihi Shahrastani to the Seljuq court, where he had been murdered in 523/1129. The later records suggest that Pir Mashaikh (d. 1108/1697) compiled about 16 books in 1092/1680, in which he has also used the term khoja like Sayed Imam Shah. Virji Premji Parpiya had translated one of the Persian manuscript of his forefather, called Khoja Ibaloo (d. 1208/1794), entitled "Khoja Iblani Vansh'nu Vratant" (Bombay, 1917), who begins the account of his forebear, called Khoja Bhaloo (d. 1016/1607) during the time of Pir Dadu (d. 1005/1596). It also contains frequent usage of the term khoja. Captain Alexandar Hamlet reports in 1140/1728 that the wealth of a certain merchant, called Khoja Muhammad Hirji of Bombay was more than that of East India Company. The balance of argument tends to sound that the khoja is an unswerving word since its origin without being adulterated even in later period.

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The khoja is a Hindi word, its verb being khoj, means to search. According to "Encyclopaedia Asiatica" (Delhi, 1982, 5th vol., p. 564), the Hindi word khoja means information or search. The Persian prof. Kassim Sumar Thariani of Elphinstone College of Bombay, also ruled out its origin from khwaja, and writes that, Khoja is a word derived from Hindi word khoj means to dig out, or search in such a sense that it turns to mean, one who is engrossed in search of truth in religion." (cf. "Khoja Gnanti'nu Gorav" by V.N. Hooda, Bombay, 1927, p. 118)

The local low castes were simply converted in the time of Pir Satgur without being loaded with rituals, and after their admission they were consigned the Sufic practice of zikr, for which they were mastered in their former cults; and were instructed to "get absorbed" (kho'ja!) in deep contemplation. This phrase purporting kho'ja (get absorbed) gradually became a significant phrase among the absorptive initiates, rather it became a distinctive title, or identification among local people. In sum, the new converts first embraced Ismaili faith, and then became khoja (the absorptive ones), which also sounds the notion of "Moman Chetamanni" (stanza 198-199) of Sayed Imam Shah.

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